British Combine

African chiefs visit their troops fighting in the British forces during the war. Africa has the largest dependent area in the world within its boundaries and the largest number of dependent peoples

Trusteeship, Christian Missions and Africa

By Emory Ross *

PERHAPS because Africa was deemed to be remote and relatively simple and therefore suitable as a starter, Italy's three pre-war African colonies were the first item reported discussed at the Council of Foreign Ministers in London in September—the first peace conference after World War II. What followed showed anew—and one hopes clearly—the intimate complexity of world concerns.

The foreign ministers, their governments, the papers, and the people found they couldn't discuss those African colonies apart from the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, the Arabs, the Jews, Near East oil, Russia, the Balkans, Trieste, the Ruhr, reparations, the four-zone rule in Germany, a Western bloc, a Far East Control Commission, Evatt's demands, trusteeship, the Economic and Social Council, the principle of the unilateral veto, what Potsdam really meant and—after twenty-two days—whether the Council could afford to adjourn without signing even the secret factual account of its sessions. About the only definitive answer given to any of those questions was "yes" to the last. The Council "decided to terminate its present session" on October 2 without signing the record of its proceedings.

To wounded and hungry mankind that sounds foolish and hopeless. To stiff-faced geocentric negotiators it may seem to make sense. Some principle has been preserved; the national position remains unimpaired. Perhaps so, but man's position is jeopardized.

His position is jeopardized in Africa by such disagreements and stalemates. So also is man's position in Palestine and Java and New Zealand and Missouri and Wales. The African's position was as closely linked to the London meeting as was that of Mr. Byrnes' own fellow South Carolinians, black and white. In our world today the corn can't be green—

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and stay green—in Wales unless everywhere the sea is free, exchange is just, man is lifted, and the spirit is aided to the highest fulfillment possible in a human being.

For a century the Christian mission has been serving man and the spirit in Africa. To begin with it was a completely "foreign" labor undertaken by non-Africans, mostly white. In the second and the current third and fourth generations it has become in large measure an African labor. Foreigners, white and colored, are a tiny minority in the growing African church, and for the most part they seem wisely to be supporting and strengthening the African constituency, leadership, and outreach.

It appears clear to most students of African affairs that the Christian mission (*a*) has been the pioneer nearly everywhere in Africa in modern education, linguistics, literacy, literature, medicine, public health, agriculture, and social advance; and (*b*) still carries a disproportionate share (perhaps as much as 85 per cent) of the total educational load in Africa either with or without government aids of different sorts.

Some criticize the Christian mission for bringing so much change into African life, or for the methods used in bringing it. As for the change, it was inevitable. Missions pioneered in the elements mentioned and still carry a large share of the load, but nearly every other force touching Africa from the outside in the past century has brought or contributed to change also: trade, political forces, western law, foreign literature, sea transportation, motor salesmen, air lines, cinema, military forces, war, liquor, land ownership, the press, labor unions, clothing merchants, the postal system, mail order houses, co-operatives, international health agencies. Change has been made inevitable by a world pushing in upon Africa.

As to methods, serious criticism has been justified in a good many ways, both of missions and of other forces bringing change. The errors of missions have been largely due to unfamiliarity with African background and culture—a weakness in all approach to Africa—and a consequent reliance and too rigid insistence on non-African experience and methods for Africa. The past twenty years have seen progressive correction of that situation.

What is now further to be said here is based on two beliefs. One is that the church in Africa has made not only the pioneer but a major continuing effort for Africa's awakening, for the lifting of African's visions and hopes, and has contributed largely to preparing some thousands of Africans for discharging increasing responsibility in the conduct of their own affairs. The second belief—basic to the first and many others—is that the Christian directive and dynamic is correctly interpreted as laying upon Christians everywhere responsibility for advancing the good of men everywhere.

For those holding those two beliefs it would seem clear that the following seven commitments are well up among those which Christians in the United States and Canada—two nations so closely linked in their overseas Christian service—should seek to discharge in our critical post-war era.

1. Most serious study should be made throughout the whole of the North American church of the major aspects of national and world problems affecting the well-being of man and the peace of mankind, to help determine and assure the exercise of right Christian influence on national and world policies for justice and peace.

2. The question of trusteeship and dependent area policies should be given particular attention and action. Africa has within it the largest dependent area in the world, and the largest number of dependent people.[1]

3. Racial understandings and co-operation must be greatly bettered at home and overseas, with the church taking increased responsibility for action in this respect.

4. Religious liberty has been denied or severely curtailed in a number of countries, and there is danger that it may be still more reduced in the post-war period. The North American Christian forces should give study and right action in this field both in the two home countries and in relations with other peoples and governments.

5. Animism is no adequate spiritual guide for African advancement in any realm of the heart, the head, or the body any more than it was for the advancing Hebrews or Saxons centuries ago. Christianity has been for many and can be for all Africans willing to accept it the greatest modern transforming power for the individual and for the group. North American churches have a large responsibility, long since accepted but inadequately discharged, for the Christian evangelizing of Africa.

6. The broad educational services rendered by Canadian and American Christian missions for more than a century are among the most powerful modern factors in Africa's development to its present stage, and they ought to be further enlarged in the post-war period.

7. Five aspects of education ought especially to have new and wider treatment: education of women, use of land, literacy, literature, seminary training.

Special comment is perhaps desirable on paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 above.

The definition and significance of the trusteeship proposals in the United Nations' Charter are not at all well known in North America. First, they constitute the only broad, international agreement ever signed on the principles of trusteeship. Second, they are principles only insofar as international accord is concerned—"that the interests of the inhabitants

[1] Indians are not here included among "dependent people," that term being applied in this discussion only to the inhabitants of colonies, protectorates, condominiums, and mandates.

of these (dependent) territories are paramount," that the United Nations' trusteeship system should promote "progressive development towards self-government or independence," "should encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all," etc. They do not represent any agreement to put any dependent area under the proposed Trusteeship Council. They only open the way and provide the agreed means of doing it if the nations now having or hereafter acquiring dependent areas wish to do so. Third, being principles only they require the hard work of many men in many places to bring them into action internationally.

Such work can fortunately be guided to a considerable extent by the individual policies and experience of certain of the colonial powers which have formulated such principles for their own colonial areas and are seeking to carry them out. The work will be made difficult, however, by three major factors: (1) not all colonial powers use as their guide the principles set out in the Charter; (2) the war has greatly stimulated the demands of dependent peoples for immediate or early self-government or independence, and the question of tempo in the various colonies will probably present special problems; (3) ignorance of colonial matters among the people of noncolonial powers and even among large numbers of citizens of colonial nations presents something of a problem of mass education on this subject before fuller and intelligent popular support can be given.

The Church has a vital role to play in informing and securing the expression of public opinion in North America with regard to internationally-agreed policies affecting Africa: (*a*) because of its century-and-a-quarter knowledge and understanding of African needs and potentials through its spiritual, educational, medical, agricultural, literacy, literature, and social relationships with great masses of African peoples—knowledge and understanding unapproached by any other group in North American life; and (*b*) because of its over-all duty of vigorously stimulating and supporting all American and Canadian participation in world affairs based on the application of Christian principles.

The racial aspects of the dependent area problem are accentuated by the fact that colonial powers have always been predominantly white and that now, Japan being eliminated, they are exclusively white. Dependent peoples are almost all colored. No amount of discussion can change those facts. And no amount of talk will convince the mass of dependent peoples that color as *color* and race as *race* are not large factors in the maintenance of the colonial system. There are many things that can be truthfully said on the other side. But one of the clearest things about the racial situations in the world today is that talk and discussion are not now very effective. The urge is increasingly for action. The same urge is seen in other international situations between governments: clear action is asked as a proof of intent and sincerity. Dependent peoples, nearly all colored, ask the same.

The racial aspects of the African scene require direct and undiluted Christian treatment. The modern church has a shamefully spotty record on race. But there is nothing in man's experience to excel undiluted Christianity when applied to race—or to any other human problem. Our churches need to join their sister churches of other lands in re-forming their own attitudes in their own communities wherever racial contacts occur, and in realistically applying Christian principles in their racial relationships to Africa and to all other dependent areas. The first additional advance must be made at home. We are sullied abroad in this and every other matter if we are not at home as clean as ever we can be.

The question of religious liberty, a part of the body of human rights and fundamental freedoms emphasized in the Charter, faces the North American church at home and overseas. What is religious liberty? There is no world agreement. There is not agreement in the United States and Canada between Protestants and Roman Catholics. In other areas where Roman Catholics are stronger the disagreement is even clearer. Disagreement in such areas is somewhat paralleled by that in Muslim areas where, like Rome, Islam holds itself to be the only true religion, alone possessed of the right to propagate itself.

Careful and calm consideration of this great human problem—fundamental to all human rights—should be given by Protestant groups all through North America. The unique text for basic study of the problem in M. Searle Bates' new book, *Religious Liberty: An Inquiry,* published under the guidance of the Joint Committee on Religious Liberty of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.[2] Nothing like it has ever been done before.

Public officials in North America need to be made acquainted with this problem. Reasoned, quiet insistence on religious liberty for all men everywhere is a contribution to global justice and lasting peace.

North American churches are studying Africa this year. Africa has a new significance. Inextricably tied with all the world, it is one of the world's most searching tests of national and international intentions. The Christian Church has done great service in helping Africans bring Africa to this point. It must now share an added task for Africa and all dependent areas. Required are mature judgment and high realism. Success should prove of incalculable consequence for Africa, security, and peace.

[2] International Missionary Council, 156 5th Ave., New York 10, New York.